DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 272 021 FL 015 883

AUTHOR Feustle, Joseph A., Jr.
TITLE Spanish and Legal Assisting: A Collaborative Venture.
PUB DATE May 85
NOTE 12p.; In: Proceedings of the Eastern Michigan University Conference on Languages for Business and the Professions (4th, Dearborn, MI, May 2-4, 1985); see FL 015 835.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Second Language Programs; Curriculum Development; Degree Requirements; Higher Education; Interdisciplinary Approach; *Languages for Special Purposes; *Legal Assistants; *Legal Education (Professions); *Majors (Students); Program Design; Second Language Instruction; *Spanish
IDENTIFIERS University of Toledo OH

ABSTRACT

The University of Toledo's Spanish and Legal Assisting program provides two degree tracks, a twenty-five course program in the Community and Technical College and a coordinated bachelor's program in the College of Arts and Sciences. The shorter legal assisting program provides training allowing individuals to work under an attorney's supervision, and the longer program is based on a Spanish major with a minor in legal assisting. Courses are sequenced to maximize cultural awareness and language proficiency, and include two civilization courses. Standard, not regional, Spanish is used. Business and legal vocabulary are introduced early in the Spanish program, and computerized vocabulary drills have been developed for program use. The fact that the program requires no additional tenured full-time staff, has the potential for increasing enrollments, and addresses a potentially high demand has aided in garnering administrative support. The greatest difficulty in designing the program was in gaining support in the College of Arts and Sciences. The program has already brought visibility to the language department, promoted professional growth among staff, and created links with the community. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED272021

SPANISH AND LEGAL ASSISTING: A COLLABORATIVE VENTURE

By

Joseph A. Feustle, Jr.

Chairman, Department of Foreign Languages

The University of Toledo

Toledo, Ohio

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

G. Voght

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

FL015883

SPANISH AND LEGAL ASSISTING: A COLLABORATIVE VENTURE

Joseph A. Feustle, Jr.
Department of Foreign Languages
The University of Toledo

The Legal Assisting Program at the University of Toledo has been in existence over nine years and is housed in the Community and Technical College (a separate branch of the university) under the direction of Dr. Nancy C. Robon. It is the only legal assisting program in northwest Ohio to be approved by the American Bar Association. Some two years ago, efforts were made to combine this program with the study of Spanish, housed in the College of Arts and Sciences, in order to offer our students a new and innovative collaborative undergraduate major.

Collaboration is not a new idea for the Department of Foreign Languages. Over the past three years, this department has worked jointly with the International Business Institute of the College of Business on a federally funded project to create courses and materials for the study of the interaction between the world of international business and foreign cultures and languages. The end result was the creation of special business language and culture courses in French, German, Russian, and Spanish. The department has also collaborated with the Department of Secondary Education of the College of Education in creating a close working relationship with the area secondary school foreign language programs and teachers. These efforts

have culminated in an annual fall conference on the teaching of foreign cultures, languages and literatures which, last year, attracted some one hundred twenty-five colleagues to our campus. The department has also worked, and continues to work, with the Department of English in the funding and maintenance of a jointly-used computer terminal room, and is currently seeking, along with English, funding for a micro computer laboratory.

Collaboration, according to readings of recent issues of the A.D.F.L. Bulletin seems to have become one of the watchwords for the survival of foreign languages in the mid 1980's (16, 2, January 1985). "Cooperation", or just plain "hanging together", as Lewis and Godbey have called it, are other appropriate synonyms (ADFL Bulletin 16, 1, September 1984). Our experience with collaboration indicates that it is not an immediate remedy for low or declining enrollments. The cooperative ventures outlined before will require years of filling the pipeline before they will pay off in significant enrollment gains. The largest single plus to the present has been that collaboration has moved our department in new directions, and it has created new and interesting opportunities for our faculty, and courses for our students. In the case of Spanish and Legal Assisting, collaboration has added four new courses to our offerings. It has also opened new, and previously un-tapped ways for students to enter the study of Spanish.

Students choosing to major in Spanish and Legal Assisting

may do so by enrolling in either the Community and Technical College or the College of Arts and Sciences. If they start with our Community and Technical College, they must complete a curriculum consisting of some twenty-five courses, totaling ninety-six credit hours. By a special arrangement ninety of these are automatically accepted by Arts and Sciences, under a program commonly referred to as "two plus two," with three hours of Social Science, five of Humanities and fifteen of Natural Science being required for graduation in addition to the hours of electives and the major program in Spanish. If the students choose to enter the program through initial enrollment in the College of Arts and Sciences, in addition to the usual courses of study, they will take some fifty-one hours of the major in Spanish, and twenty-four in legal assisting at the Community and Technical College as "supporting courses" (a minor) for the major program.

The legal assisting program provides training that allows individuals to work under the supervision of an attorney, particularly assisting with discovery, legal research, the drafting of legal documents, and other related duties. The curriculum consists of the following courses: introduction to law; introduction to legal assisting; legal research; civil procedures; advanced legal research; tort law; business organizations; estate and probate administration; real estate transactions, and a legal assisting internship.

In Spanish, the student's major program starts at the sophomore level with Business Spanish, a course created by earlier collaborative efforts with the College of Business. It continues at the junior level with two four-credit-hour courses in conversation, followed by a review of Spanish grammar (we had earlier decided to separate these traditionally combined studies, conversation and grammar, in order to concentrate even more on linguistic proficiency). The junior-level sequence is completed with a course in Latin American civilization. None of these courses is new, nor is additional staff required. They form part of our regular major track. At the senior-year level, the students take our traditional two-course sequence in Spanish syntax and stylistics. At this level, they will encounter new courses specifically created for this program, many of which should also prove attractive to the more traditional Spanish language and literature major. The courses in question are: Spanish for legal assistants; readings in Hispanic literature; translation and interpretation, and contemporary Hispanic civilization.

There is clearly visible in our structuring and sequencing of courses an effort to maximize cultural awareness and language proficiency. We hope to achieve what Marilyn R. Frankenthaler, in her Skills for Bilingual Legal Personnel (1982), calls "cultural fluency" in our junior and senior civilization courses. The course in "contemporary" civilization was added due to the

fact that the traditional "civ" courses never seem to make it to the Mexican Revolution, much less to the 1988's. Of the two, the former will be the more challenging to teach given the difficulty in finding suitable materials, even in a city with a wonderful Spanish name like our's, Toledo. In addition to the usual source material for "civ" courses, we hope (budget pending) to be able to take advantage of foreign-made video tapes and, perhaps, television programs destined for the Spanish-speaking public taken from satellite transmissions. We have carefully chosen a broad-based look at all of Latin America, even though the largest Hispanic group in the Toledo area is the Mexican-American. Likewise, we have targeted our language courses on a "standard" Spanish, as Frankenthaler has suggested, in opposition to concentrating only on the Spanish spoken by the Mexican-Americans. The wisdom of this choice seems to have been confirmed by the employment prospects for our first graduate who, though she will do her internship in Toledo, will most probably work in Florida with the Cuban community after graduation. Thus, we prefer to leave the particularities of individual dialects and cultural idiosyncrasies to the realm of the working world, after the student has been well grounded as an undergraduate in the basics of the Spanish language.

On the very practical side, we are now in the process of augmenting the materials that Frankenthaler provides in her text with sample documents for the students to work with and translate

from the Toledo area legal system. Probably the single most difficult thing for the student to acquire in preparation for his or her career is the appropriate vocabulary. Legalese in English is enough of a challenge without adding to it the complexities of a foreign tongue. To this end, we have begun entering the most common standard legal terms and phrases into modular computerized vocabulary drills so that the students may start acquisition very early in the major program, and not be faced with a nearly impossible task in their senior year. These programs are now being done for the Apple IIe line now used at The University of Toledo, and will be re-done this summer for the IBM-PC, the computer of choice of many attorneys. The vocabulary will be augmented through constant consultation with attorneys working with the Hispanic community in the Toledo area. This process is already under way. This course will eventually be staffed by a Spanish-speaking attorney employed as either an adjunct or part-time member of the department. The rest of the courses will be taught by members of the department's regular staff.

The fact that these courses will not require any additional tenured full-time staff, that they have the potential for increasing enrollments, makes them all the easier to sell to a administration conscious of predicted enrollment declines in the future and of tough competition for scarce funds both inside and outside the university. Collaborative efforts like this one have been fully supported at both decanal and vice presidental levels

at The University of Toledo. This support was verified before any formal steps toward creation of the program were initiated. Contacts were also made with the Toledo legal and hispanic communities.

The demand for Spanish-speaking legal assistants in Ohio is potentially quite large. Estimates of the state's Spanish-speaking population range from 120,000 to 270,000. In Lucas County alone, which encompases the greater Toledo area, there are some 24,000 Hispanics, and the Hispanic case load in the area courts is already quite substantial. The statistical information used to substantiate our case for this program was obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Spanish Commission in Columbus, Ohio, and, of very significant help locally, from the Spanish-speaking department of the Catholic Diocese of Toledo.

Once all details of the collaborative relationship were worked out, a working lunch was hosted which brought together faculty and administrators from the university, and representatives from the area legal and Hispanic communities. The presence of the deans of the Community and Technical College and the College of Arts and Sciences along with Judge Joseph Flores of the Toledo Municipal Court, several Spanish-speaking practicing attorneys, and representatives of key goverment and diocesan "service" programs greatly facilitated the ironing out of the final details. It was important for representatives from the university to hear directly from the community regarding the

desirability of the Spanish and legal assisting program. In starting a program of this nature, enough emphasis cannot be given to the need to carefully build support both inside and outside the university environment.

Support for this program was already present in the Department of Foreign Languages. Though not blessed with embarrassingly high enrollments, our's now have increased to the point where, in Spanish, we more than meet the F.T.E. (full-time equivalent) model for staffing established by the Ohio Board of Regents. In addition, as we never intended to retrain ourselves in the field of law, there was never a threat to our departmental identity. Our experience with collaborative efforts has taught us that one of the most important things we have to offer in such ventures is our training as humanists. Though we have added programs that reach out to three other colleges within the university, we have never lost sight of our roles as humanists, nor have we ceased being predominantly a department of foreign languages and literatures.

The only difficulty encountered in achieving final approval for this program was in obtaining the positive vote of the legislative council of the College of Arts and Sciences. Here, the major issues related to the need for additional staff, to projected enrollment growth, and to the nature of the civilization courses we were teaching. Some colleagues from other departments questioned whether it might not be better to

have the majors in this program take their additional work in history, political science or sociology rather than create an additional course in the department of foreign languages. Since that course would be taught in Spanish, and would transcend the limits of a single history or cultural anthropology course, this minor problem was solved, and approval given. In all candor, our willingness to recommend additional study in other departments, along with assurances that there would no vast stampede of students from other programs into ours helped soothe this potentially sore spot.

Has collaboration paid off? The next few years will decide the answer. For the present, it has given the department of foreign languages much higher visibility within the college structure; it has offered new opportunities for growth to both our faculty and our students. It has allowed us to transcend the traditional boundaries of university structure. In particular, the legal assisting program has rooted us firmly in the surrounding community and has allowed us to meet a specific need. Perhaps above all, it has allowed us to demonstrate to our upper administration that we are doing all that we can to maximize our potential, and it has allowed us to achieve new growth and yet maintain our roles as humanists and teachers of languages and literatures.

List of Works Cited

Frankenthaler, Marylin R. Skills for Bilingual Legal Personnel (Cincinnati: South-Western Publishing Co., 1982).

Lewis, David W. P. and Galen C. Godbey, "Hanging Together: A Cooperative Strategy for Language Departments," ADFL Bulletin 16, 1 (September 1985), 3-11.